

Client Project Description

Playa del Rey is part of the Westchester Playa del Rey Community Plan and is located in the far western and northwestern portion of the Plan area. Most of the commercial uses are located along Culver Boulevard, Pershing Drive and Manchester Avenue. These commercial areas are neighborhood serving in nature and characterized by smaller, individually owned lots. This “Village” form of development provides opportunities for smaller, locally operated businesses.

Within Council District 11 boundaries, there are five Community Design Overlays (CDO's). The Lincoln CDO is in Venice, the West Pico CDO is in West LA and the West Wilshire CDO is in West LA and Brentwood. The downtown Westchester and Loyola Village CDOs are in the Westchester Playa del Rey Community Plan area.

The purpose of a CDO is to increase pedestrian activity and to improve design and enhance the existing character of the area. CDO guidelines and standards, for example, require orientation of buildings toward the major commercial street and that every building shall have a pedestrian entrance on the major commercial street. The community plan states that a CDO would be a major opportunity for the area for encouraging enhanced design.

The Client project would consist of working with the council office, the Planning Department, the Westchester/Playa Neighborhood Council and other community groups in the writing and formulation of the CDO. Using examples from other CDOs in the area, the student would begin by documenting the current uses and setting through pictures, words and maps and then formulate, with the community and council office, the goals and objectives of the CDO. The student would work with the community and council office on community outreach and meetings, and would write the CDO with the assistance of the council office, community and Planning Department.

The interested student should look at the current CDOs and determine if he/she is interested in the project. The link is <http://cityplanning.lacity.org/>. On the left side of the page, there is a General Plan Tab. Under that tab, click on Community Plans tab and then on the area of the City where the CDO is located. The interested student can email Whitney at whitney.blumenfeld@lacity.org for further questions. Below is attached the Los Angeles Municipal Code governing the formulation of CDOs.

SEC. 13.08. “CDO” COMMUNITY DESIGN OVERLAY DISTRICT. (New Sec. 13.08 Added by Ord. No. 172,032, Eff. 6/29/98.)

A. Purpose. This section sets forth procedures and standards for the establishment of Community Design Overlay Districts throughout the City. The purpose of the Community Design Overlay district is to:

1. Assure that development within communities is in accordance with community design policies adopted in the Community Plans, and with the Community Design Guidelines and Standards;
2. Promote the distinctive character, stability and visual quality of existing neighborhoods and communities by ensuring that development visually provides a sense of place in terms of design within the Community Design Overlay District by considering the unique architectural character and environmental setting of the district;
3. Assist in improving the visual attractiveness of multi-family housing available to meet the needs of all social and economic groups within the community;
4. Protect areas of natural scenic beauty, cultural or environmental interest;
5. Prevent the development of structures or uses which are not of acceptable exterior design or appearance; and
6. Protect the integrity of previously attained entitlements.
7. Provide for on-going community involvement in project design and evolution of guidelines.

B. Establishment of District. (Amended by Ord. No. 173,268, Eff. 7/1/00, Oper. 7/1/00.) The City Council may establish new districts, or change boundaries of districts, by following the procedures set forth in Section 12.32S of this Code. A district may encompass all or portions of the area of a community plan, as recommended by the policies of that plan. Precise boundaries are required at the time of application or initiation of an individual Community Design Overlay District. A Community Design Overlay District shall not encompass an area designated as an Historic Preservation Overlay Zone pursuant to Section 12.20.3 of this Code.

C. Definitions. For the purpose of this section, the following words and phrases are defined as follows:

1. Design Overlay Plans. A document or documents which pictorially describe, by professionally accepted architectural graphic techniques, the location, appearance, configuration and dimensions of any proposed buildings, structures and site improvements including but not limited to landscaping, walls and fences, roof equipment, pole signs, monument signs, and parking areas.
2. Project. The erection, construction, addition to, or exterior structural alteration of any building or structure, including, but not limited to, pole signs and/or monument signs located in a Community Design Overlay District. A Project does not include construction that consists solely of (1) interior remodeling, interior rehabilitation or repair work; (2) alterations of, including structural repairs, or additions to any existing building or structure in which the aggregate value of the work, in any one 24-

month period, is less than 50 percent of the building or structure's replacement value before the alterations or additions, as determined by the Department of Building and Safety, unless the alterations or additions are to any building facade facing a public street; or (3) a residential building on a parcel or lot which is developed entirely as a residential use and consists of four or fewer dwelling units, unless expressly provided for in a Community Design Overlay District established pursuant to this section.

3. Citizen Advisory Committee. A committee appointed by the Councilmember(s) pursuant to Subsection D2 of this section in whose District a Community Design Overlay District is established, who shall assist the Planning Department in the development of Design Guidelines and Standards.

D. Approval of Guidelines and Standards. In establishing any individual Community Design Overlay District, the Director of Planning shall prepare, and the City Planning Commission shall approve by resolution, Community Design Guidelines and Standards applicable to design overlay areas. These Guidelines and Standards shall be adopted or amended according to the following procedures and criteria:

1. Initiation. Preparation or amendment of the Guidelines and Standards may be initiated by the Director of Planning, the City Planning Commission or City Council.

2. Preparation and Content. Upon initiation, the Director shall prepare, or cause to be prepared, proposed Guidelines and Standards based on the design policies contained in the Community Plan. At the option of the Council District, the Director shall utilize Advisory Boards in the development of design standards for individual communities and neighborhoods. The Guidelines and Standards shall be organized into those which are anticipated to be superseded by future citywide standards, and those that are necessary to protect the unique architectural and environmental features of the Community Design Overlay District.

The Guidelines and Standards are in addition to those set forth in the planning and zoning provisions of Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) Chapter I, as amended, and any other relevant ordinances and do not convey any rights not otherwise granted under the provisions and procedures contained in that chapter and other relevant ordinances, except as specifically provided herein.

Furthermore, nothing in the Guidelines and Standards shall interfere with any previously granted entitlements, nor shall they restrict any right authorized in the underlying zone or height district.

At the option of the Councilmember(s), a Citizen Advisory Committee shall be appointed to assist in development of Guidelines and Standards. The Citizen Advisory Committee shall be appointed by the Councilmember in whose district the Community Design Overlay District is established, and the committee shall consist of a minimum of five and a maximum of seven voting members, each serving a term of office of four

years, the terms being staggered so that at least one term becomes vacated on each successive year. The chairperson and vice chairperson shall be elected annually by a majority of the committee. The suggested composition of membership is as follows: two architects and two professionals from the following or related fields: planning, urban design and landscape architecture, or construction. The remaining member or members need not be design professionals. All members shall reside, operate a business, or be employed within the community plan area(s) in which the Community Design Overlay District is located.

3. Commission Hearing and Notice. (Amended by Ord. No. 173,268, Eff. 7/1/00, Oper. 7/1/00.) The proposed or amended Guidelines and Standards shall be set for a public hearing before the City Planning Commission or a hearing officer as directed by the City Planning Commission prior to the Commission action. Notice of the hearing shall be given as provided in Section 12.24D2 of this Code.

4. Reports. (Amended by Ord. No. 173,268, Eff. 7/1/00, Oper. 7/1/00.) If a hearing officer is designated to conduct the public hearing, after the conclusion of the hearing, the hearing officer shall submit his report to the City Planning Commission within a period of time as may be fixed by the Commission, setting forth his or her conclusions and recommendations in writing and stating briefly the reasons therefor.

5. Decision by City Planning Commission. (Amended by Ord. No. 173,268, Eff. 7/1/00, Oper. 7/1/00.) The City Planning Commission shall, by resolution, approve, modify or disapprove the proposed Guidelines and Standards. If the City Planning Commission fails to act within 75 days from the receipt of the report and recommendation of the Planning Department, the proposed Guidelines and Standards shall be automatically submitted to the City Council for action. In approving the Guidelines and Standards, the City Planning Commission or Council shall find that they are consistent with the policies of the adopted Community Plan and the purposes of this section.

E. Design Overlay Plan Approvals. (Amended by Ord. No. 173,268, Eff. 7/1/00, Oper. 7/1/00.) Within a Community Design Overlay District, no building permit shall be issued for any project, and no person shall perform any construction work on a Project, until a Design Overlay Plan has been submitted and approved according to the following procedures. No building permit shall be issued for any project, and no person shall do any construction work on a project except in conformance with the approved Design Overlay Plan.

EXCEPTION:

No Design Overlay Plan approval shall be required for any project until the Guidelines and Standards have been approved.

1. Approval Authority. The Director of Planning, or his or her designee, shall approve or conditionally approve Design Overlay Plans if the plans comply with the

provisions of approved Community Design Guidelines and Standards. An approval of a Design Overlay Plan by the Director of Planning, or his or her designee, shall be appealable to the Area Planning Commission.

2. Procedures.

(a) Application. An application for a Design Overlay Plan approval shall be filed with the Department of City Planning on the prescribed form, and shall be accompanied by any required materials. The application shall not be considered complete unless and until the form has been properly completed, all required information has been provided and the filing fee set forth in Section 19.01T of this Code has been paid.

(b) Action of Director. The Director of Planning, or his or her designee, shall make a determination within 20 working days from the date of the filing of a completed application and the payment of the applicable fee. This time limit may be extended by mutual written agreement of the applicant and the Director.

(c) Transfer of Jurisdiction. If the Director or his or her designee fails to make a determination within the prescribed time period, the applicant may file a request for a transfer of jurisdiction to the Area Planning Commission for a determination on the original application, in which case, the Director shall lose jurisdiction. This request shall be filed in the public office of the Department of City Planning. Once filed, the request and the Department file shall be transmitted to the Area Planning Commission for action.

3. Findings. The Director of Planning, or the Area Planning Commission on appeal, shall approve a Design Overlay Plan as requested or in modified form if, based on the application and the evidence submitted, if the Director or Area Commission determines that it satisfies all of the following requirements:

(a) The project substantially complies with the adopted Community Design Overlay Guidelines and Standards.

(b) The structures, site plan and landscaping are harmonious in scale and design with existing development and any cultural, scenic or environmental resources adjacent to the site and in the vicinity.

4. Notice of Director's Determination. Within five working days following the decision, a Notice of the Director's Determination, and copies of the approved plans, shall be mailed to the applicant, the Councilmember in whose district the Project is located, the Citizen Advisory Committee, and any persons or organizations commenting on the application or requesting a Notice.

5. Effective Date and Appeal.

(a) The Director's determination shall become effective and final 15 days after the date of mailing the Notice of Director's Determination to the applicant, unless an appeal is filed with the Area Planning Commission within that period.

(b) An applicant, member of the City Council, or any other interested person adversely affected may appeal the Director's decision to the Area Commission. Appeals shall be processed in the manner prescribed in Section 16.05H of this Code, except as otherwise provided here.

6. Notice to Building and Safety. The Director of Planning shall notify the Department of Building and Safety of the final approval action of the Design Overlay Plan.